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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0346
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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 000897

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DRL/MLGA FOR LYNN SICADE/SYLVIA HAMMOND, EUR/WE, EUR/PGI,
IO/RHS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/11/2017

TAGS: PHUM PREL UNHRC SP

SUBJECT: SPAIN: UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ELECTION

REF: A. STATE 63345

1B. STATE 64169

1C. MADRID 835

Classified By: DCM Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) DCM raised with Spanish MFA PolCouns Rafael Dezcällar May 10 the USG's strong desire for Spain's support in countering the Belarus candidacy for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council and its active efforts in favor of the candidacies of Slovenia and Bosnia. DCM underscored that the request for support had come from Under Secretary Nick Burns and that this was a high priority for the USG. DCM referred to Spain's positive response to our earlier demarche (ref C) in which the MFA made clear Spain's opposition to the Belarus candidacy and support for Slovenia. Dezcällar was not aware of the issue and suggested we touch base with Deputy Director for Human Rights Fernando Fernandez-Arias who has the lead in the MFA on this issue.

12. (C) PolCouns followed up morning of May 11 with Fernandez-Arias, and provided information in ref B that Bosnia had formally put forward its candidacy.

Fernandez-Arias had not yet heard that Bosnia had come forward and was relieved to hear the news. He said that this would help the EU, as EU Missions in New York were to meet May 11 under the auspices of the German Presidency to determine next steps. He pointed toward the recent EU decision not to support a candidate that is in violation of human rights standards. He said that while the UK and France were actively campaigning against Belarus by name, the EU, while making its position clear, had decided not to specifically name Belarus. For Spain, Fernandez-Arias said, this was appropriate, since as CiO of the Organization for Cooperation in Europe, Spain felt it inappropriate to actively campaign against another OSCE member by name; he pointed out, however, that Spain had made its opposition to Belarus well-known.

13. (C) Fernandez-Arias said the Bosnia candidacy was a positive development because this provided those who were voting for Slovenia a clear choice for the other seat. Arias was pessimistic, however, that the effort to prevent Belarus from winning a seat would be successful, since Belarus chaired the Non-Aligned Movement and could count on their numerous votes.

14. (C) Nonetheless, Fernandez-Arias reiterated that Spain strongly opposed Belarus, would vote for Slovenia and almost certainly would vote for Bosnia and would make this recommendation to MFA senior leadership. Polcouns underscored that this issue was of great concern to the USG's

senior leadership and that the DCM's discussion with Dezcollar reflected the USG's strong investment in doing everything possible to prevent Belarus from winning a seat on the UN Human Rights Council. Arias agreed this would be a disaster and indicated that Spain was fully in line with efforts to ensure Belarus did not get elected.

Aguirre